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ABSTRACT

In 1981, the Puente program was established at California's City College of San Francisco to improve the transfer rates of Chicano/Latino students to senior institutions. The program provides a supportive and stimulating environment to help students build confidence in their writing skills and provides extensive counseling and mentoring services. In 1996, a study was conducted to examine the characteristics of Puente and non-Puente Latino students and compare the two groups' completion rates and rates of progress to university-level English courses. Data were gathered on the outcomes of 420 Latino students enrolled in spring 1993, spring 1994, or spring 1995, 87 of whom participated in Puente. Results include the following: (1) students enrolled in the Puente program were similar to the larger pool of Latino students for all characteristics except age; (2) only 12% of the Puente students withdrew from their pre-college English course, compared to 24% of the non-Puente Latino students; (3) over the 3 years, 86% of the Puente students passed the English course, compared to 55% of Latinos enrolled in regular sections; and (4) 95% of the Puente students who successfully completed pre-college English enrolled in the college-level English course, compared to 58% of non-Puente Latino students. (HAA)

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CITY COLLEGE OF SAN FRANCISCO

THE PUENTE PROGRAM
Latino Student Outcomes in English 96 and 1A 1993-1995

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REPORT 966-01, DECEMBER 1996

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CITY COLLEGE OF SAN FRANCISCO

THE PUENTE PROGRAM: Latino Student Outcomes in English 96 and 1A, 1993-1995

INTRODUCTION

Background. Co-founded by Chabot College counselor Felix Galaviz and English instructor Pat McGrath in 1981, Puente was designed to improve the transfer rate of Chicano/Latino students to senior institutions. Puente established co-sponsorship with the University of California in 1985 and has grown to 38 community college campuses and 18 high schools in California today.

Program Model

Curriculum. In both the course prior to Freshman Composition (*Advanced Intermediate Reading and Composition*, English 96 at CCSF) and Freshman Composition (*University Reading and Composition*, English 1A at CCSF), the Puente Program provides a supportive and stimulating environment for Puente students to build confidence in their writing skills through an exploration of the Mexican American/Latino experience.

Counseling. Puente students work closely with their Puente counselor until they graduate, exploring career options, developing an academic educational plan and identifying lifetime goals. Students visit UC and CSU campuses and attend an annual Puente student transfer conference.

Mentoring. Each Puente student is matched with a mentor from the business or professional community. Mentors share with students their personal, academic and career experiences, and provide a window into "real-life" work environments. The network of trained Puente mentors provides many resources for the Puente students, their families, their colleges, and the community.

City College of San Francisco

Puente was established at City College in 1989. In these 8 years, one instructor has taught the two sequential English courses and 3 different counselors have organized the mentoring and counseling components. Both faculty serve as co-coordinators of the program which has consisted of a single section each term since 1989.

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The City College Puente cycle starts in the Spring of each year with English 96 (prior to 1995, the course number was English 6) and ends with English 1A (University Reading and Composition) the following Fall term. English 96 is the immediate course prerequisite to English 1A for students who do not place directly into 1A. This study compares the background characteristics of Puente and non-Puente section Latinos, their successful completion rates, rate of progress to Freshman Composition within the same year, and successful completion of English 1A.

Participant Eligibility, Selection, and Waiting List. Students who are eligible for English 96 are eligible to participate in the Puente Program. Students are selected to participate in Puente on a "first come, first serve" basis within the general priority registration system at City College. Interested students attend an orientation where they receive an *Intent to Register Form*. The form elicits a commitment from the student to enroll in both English courses (Spring and Fall), to attend class sessions regularly, to participate in mentoring activities, and to participate in occasional evening and Saturday program activities. Students completing the form are selected to participate on the basis of their priority registration date. Over the last several years, about 20-25 students who complete the *Intent to Register Form* are placed on a waiting list when the single section is filled. Demand in Fall 1996 again left 25 eligible students unserved, although the instructor made an exception to the enrollment cap and enrolled 36 students in the Puente section.

The Study

This study is organized to answer the following questions:

1. Do Latinos in Puente and regular sections of English 96 have similar background characteristics?

2. Do Latinos in Puente and non-Puente sections have similar success rates in English 96?

3. Are there significant differences in English 96 mean grades?

4. How Many non-Puente Latinos Enroll in English 1A Fall 1993, Fall 1994, and Fall 1995?

5. Do Puente and non-Puente Latinos progress to English 1A at the same rate?

6. Do Latinos in Puente and regular sections of English 96 who progress to English 1A have similar background characteristics?

7. Do Latinos in Puente and non-Puente sections have similar success rates in English 1A?

The Data

The Data

The dataset provides unduplicated course enrollment and student characteristics of Puente and non-Puente Latino students enrolled in English 6 Spring 1993, 1994, and 1995* and matched enrollments in English 1A Fall 1993, 1994, and 1995. This study focuses on Latinos who enroll in *Advanced Intermediate Reading and Composition* in the Spring, then continue to *University Reading and Composition* the Fall term immediately following. Analyses are restricted to Latinos, although persons of other ethnic backgrounds have participated in the Puente Program.

"W" Grade Included in Evaluating Grade Outcomes

Because key objectives of the Puente Program are to enhance retention and successful completion of the English sequence, the W grade becomes an essential measure of program success. In other instances it might be appropriate to disregard the W grades because community colleges do attract a large number of underprepared and overtaxed students with multiple responsibilities that detract from the student role and cause many to withdraw. It can be argued that a large part of the withdrawal problem is beyond the control of the institution. However, in this situation, the Puente Program is designed to combat this very problem. Since one of the key missions of the Puente Program is to motivate Latino students to successfully complete the English sequence *in spite of* competing demands, it is appropriate to include the W grade to evaluate the effectiveness of the program in meeting this goal.

RESULTS

1. Are Latinos in Puente and regular sections of English 96 similar in background?

Yes.

Results indicate that Puente enrollees are, for the most part, "typical" of the larger pool of Latino students enrolled in English 96 on every characteristic examined except age. The mean age difference between these two groups is only 2.25 years.

The overall similarity of these two comparison groups provides some assurance that any differences in student outcomes after participation in Puente can be attributed to the Puente Program. Grade outcome differences are not due to the background characteristics measured.

On the basis of these background characteristics, there is no evidence that selection bias--intentional or unintentional--enters into the decision to accept students into the Puente Program.

*Spring 1995 the English 6 course was renamed English 96 which, for simplicity, is the reference used throughout the report. English 96 is a composition course one level below the traditional freshman composition, or "University Reading and Composition", English 1A at City College..

Latino participants and non-participants for all semesters of English 96 were compared on the following characteristics:

- High School Source
- Sex
- Level of Educational Attainment at Entry to City College
- Educational Objective at Entry to City College
- Initial G.P.A. at beginning of Spring term
- Mean Age at beginning of Spring term

2. Do Latinos in Puente and non-Puente sections have similar success rates in English 96?

No.

Latino students not enrolled in the Puente Program are twice as likely to end English 96 with a W grade (24% vs. 12%) when compared Puente program participants . Table 1 A on the following page summarizes the final grades received over the three terms included in the study.

Table 1A

English 96
Puente vs. Regular Sections
Latino Final Grade Distribution

Three Term Summary:
Spring '93, '94, and '95

	Number			Percent		
	Sections			Sections		
Final Grade	Regular	Puente	Total	Regular	Puente	Total
A	10	6	16	3.0%	6.9%	3.8%
A-	9	9	18	2.7	10.3	4.3
B+	19	3	22	5.7	3.4	5.2
B	48	13	61	14.4	14.9	14.5
B-	23	10	33	6.9	11.5	7.9
C+	20	12	32	6.0	13.8	7.6
C	41	14	55	12.3	16.1	13.1
C-	12	8	20	3.6	9.2	4.8
D+	7		7	2.1		1.7
D	44		44	13.2		10.5
D-	1	1	2	.3	1.1	.5
F	18	1	19	5.4	1.1	4.5
W	81	10	91	24.3	11.5	21.7
Total N	333	87	420	100.%	100.%	100.%
Row %	79.3	20.7	100%			

The consequences of the grade distribution for these two groups is clearer when it is divided into success and failure outcomes. The following Table 1.B. provides a summary of success/fail grade outcomes and Graph 1 on the following page illustrates the data for each term.

Data represented in Table 1.B. indicate that over this three year period, 86% of Latinos enrolled in the Puente English 96 section earned a C minus or better grade compared to 55% of Latinos enrolled in regular sections of English 96. The Chi Square values are significant, indicating that this outcome is not due to chance.* Puente participation does have a positive impact on grade outcome of Latinos in English 96.

Table 1 B

English 96
Puente vs. Regular Sections
Latino Successful Grade Outcomes

Three Term Summary:
Spring '93, '94, and '95

Number and Percent	Sections		
Grade Outcome	Regular	Puente	Total
FAILURE N	151	12	163
%	45.3%	13.8%	38.8%
SUCCESS N	182	75	257
%	54.7%	86.2%	61.2%
Col Total N	333	87	420
Col Total %	100%	100%	100%
Row Total %	79.3%	20.7%	100%

3. Are there significant differences in English 96 mean grades?

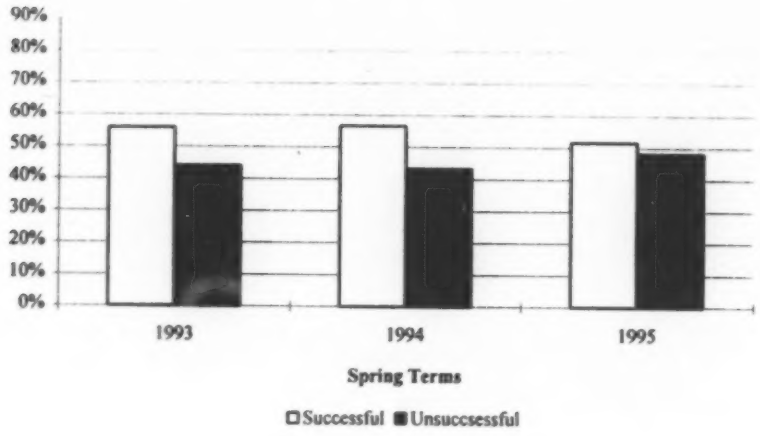
Yes.

The mean grade difference between Puente and non-Puente Latinos in English 96 is statistically significant whether W grades are included or not. Including W's, the mean difference is about seven-tenths of a grade point. Excluding W's, the mean difference is about half a grade point.

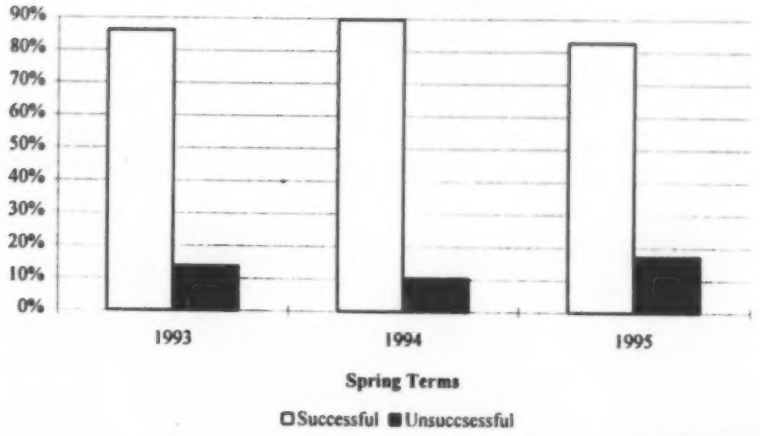
*This outcome holds when the larger group is sampled to obtain cell sizes equal to those in the Puente sections

Graph 1 English 96
Latino Grade Outcome: Three Spring Terms
Puente Vs. Regular Sections

Regular Sections



Puente Section



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Successful grade = C minus or Better
Unsuccessful grade = D, F, or W (Incompletes and Report Deferred excluded)

Summary to Questions 1, 2, and 3.

Latino students enrolled in Puente sections of English 6 have a significantly greater probability of completing the course with a successful grade than do Latinos enrolled in regular sections of English 6. Even when withdrawals are eliminated from analyses, Puente students still earn higher grades than non-Puente students. From our Question 1 results, we know that this difference is not due to differences in student background.

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4. How Many non-Puente Latinos Enroll in English 1A Fall 1993, Fall 1994, and Fall 1995?

Four hundred and eighteen non-Puente Latinos from all possible sources enrolled in English 1A over these three Fall terms. The 418 enrollees include: those who placed directly into 1A, those coming directly from the prior Spring semester pool of English 96 students, and those progressing from English 96 courses taken in other terms. From all these sources, the overall success rate (grade C- or better) of non-Puente Latinos in English 1A is 50% (208 out of 418).

5. Do Puente and non-Puente Latinos progress from English 96 to English 1A at the same rate?

No.

Ninety-five percent of Puente students successfully completing English 96 enroll in English 1A the following Fall term compared to 58% of non-Puente Latinos.

Non-Puente Progression. In the Spring terms prior to Fall 1993, 1994, and 1995, 55% (182 of 333) of all non-Puente Latinos succeeded in English 96. Of these 182 successful English 96 students, 105 (58%) enrolled in English 1A in the Fall term immediately following.

Puente Section Progression. Seventy-five of eighty-seven (86%) Puente students enrolled in English 96 succeed in that course and, of the 75 succeeding, 71 (95%) progress to English 1A the following term. This is considerably higher than the 58% of Latinos progressing from regular sections of 96 to 1A. This progression to English 1A is consistent with the program objective of improving successful completion and progression rates.

Why do only 58% (105 out of 182) of Latinos successfully completing regular Spring sections of English 96 progress to English 1A the following Fall term?

Not every student needs to take English 1A to graduate with an AA degree or to transfer to a senior institution. The English requirements for both objectives depend on the student's initial English placement and, for transfer, upon the specific requirements of the senior institution.

Students completing English 96 in the Spring term who do not progress to English 1A the following Fall term may have:

- Met degree requirement (or otherwise achieved their educational objective)
- Met general education transfer requirements for CSU or private or out-of-state senior institution (and intend to complete the Composition requirement there)
- Transferred to another community college
- Stopped out or dropped out of City College

Enrollment data are insufficient to determine the reasons non-Puente Latinos fail to make the Spring-Fall progression from English 96 to English 1A--but, we can examine the characteristics of both groups of students making the progression to see how similar they might be. Given the many reasons one might not progress from English 96 to English 1A, background characteristics are re-visited to see if non-Puente students who do progress to English 1A are distinguishable from those who do not enroll in English 1A the subsequent Fall term.

6. How similar are the characteristics of Puente and non-Puente Latinos who progress from English 96 to English 1A when compared to their own pool of English 96 successful completers? When compared with each other?

Those students who successfully complete English 96 are similar to each other on the characteristics measured--whether or not they progress to English 1A the next term. Students from this pool who enroll in English 1A immediately after English 96 are not significantly different from those successful students who do not enroll.

Age. The age of regular section students who progress is not significantly different from the age of the original pool of regular section English 96 students. The mean age of non-Puente Latinos who enrolled in English 96 is 27 years, as is the mean age for the sub-group of regular section students that advances to English 1A. (To be specific 26.8 for the pool of regular section English 96 Latinos and 26.9 for those who advance to English 1A.)

Difference in mean ages of Regular section and the Puente section students progressing to English 1A reflect the original difference found in the pool of English 96 enrollees. Puente students who advance to 1A tend to be younger with less age variation (mean age is 24 years and the standard diviation--a measure of the age range--equals 4.2 compared to 26.9 years and a standard diviation of 6.8 among non-Puente students). The difference between these two groups of students progressing to English 1A is 2.9 years, the difference in the original pool of English 96 was 2.24 years.

Primary Language. There is no significant difference between the Regular section and the Puente section students progressing to English 1A in their response to the City College application item that asks if English is their primary language.

High School of Origin. When high school origin is collapsed into four categories: S.F. Public, S.F. Private, San Mateo, and Other, about 54% of both groups have San Francisco high school origins. However, the Puente students progressing to English 1A are more likely to originate from private high schools (mainly parochial). However, these data are not as complete as other data collected *via* the College application.

Grades In English 96: Mean Comparison. Latinos making the Spring to Fall progression in these three selected years earned virtually equivalent grades in English 96, whether they were in the Puente or Regular sections of English 96. The mean English 96 grade for Puente students (71 cases) is 2.68 with a standard deviation of .79, for Regular Section Latinos (105 cases) it is 2.67 with a standard deviation of 1.09.

7. Do Latinos in Puente and non-Puente sections of English 1A have similar grade outcomes?

No.

As indicated in Table 2 which summarizes the data for three Fall terms, and in Graph 2 on the following page which provides a picture of successful and unsuccessful outcomes for each of the three Fall terms for both Puente and non-Puente students, Puente students have a considerably higher probability of success in English 1A.

Table 2

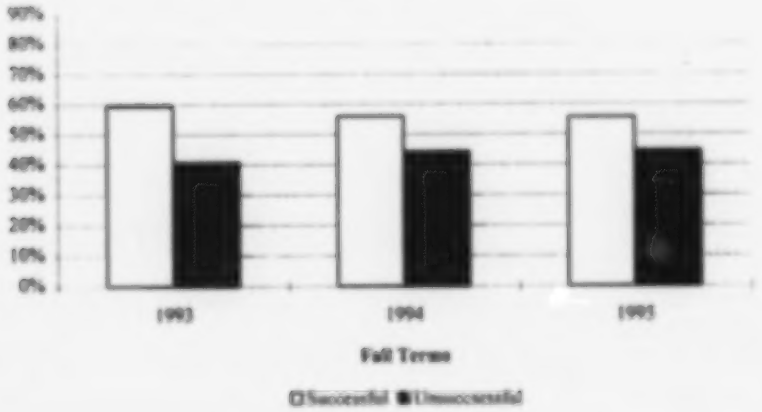
English 1A
Puente vs. Regular Sections
Latino Successful Grade Outcomes

Three Term Summary:
Fall '93, '94, '95

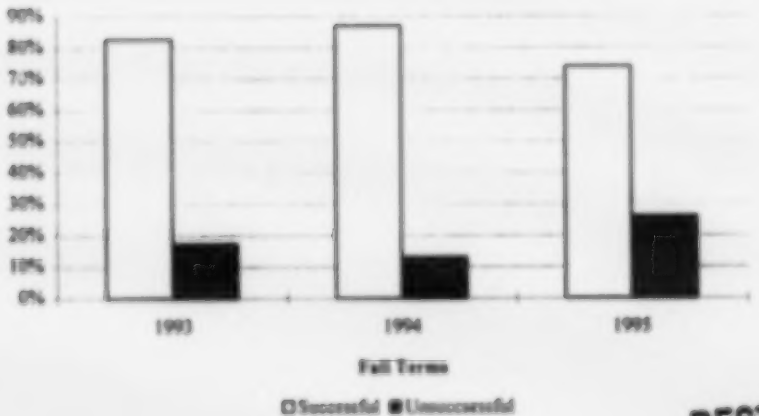
Number and Percent	Sections		
Grade Outcome	Regular	Puente	Total
FAILURE N	44	13	57
%	43.1	18.8	33.3
SUCCESS N	58	56	114
%	56.9	81.2	66.7
Col Total Num	102	69	171
Col Total %	100%	100%	100%
Row Total %	59.6	40.4	100.0

Graph 2 English 1A
Latino Grade Outcome: Three Fall Terms
Puente Vs. Regular Sections: Three Fall Terms*

Regular Sections



Puente Section



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*Comparison is restricted to those who completed English 96 the prior term.
Successful grade = C minus or Better
Unsuccessful grade = D, F, or W (Incompletes and Report Deferred excluded)

Grades In English 1A: Successful Outcomes. Puente students outperform Latinos from other sections of English 1A. When the W is included as an unsuccessful outcome, the success rate is 80% Puente vs. 55% regular sections. When the W is not included in the analyses, the outcome changes very little, to 82% success for Puente and 58% success for the Regular sections.

Grades In English 1A: Mean Comparison. When the W grade is included as a failure, mean grades for these two groups are significantly different. The mean final grade for Puente students (71 cases) is 2.55 with a standard deviation of 1.6, for Regular Section Latinos (105 cases) it is 1.87 with a standard deviation of 1.9. The mean difference is .69 and a t-test for equality of means indicates this difference is statistically significant.

When withdrawal grades are excluded from the calculations, the total number of cases drops 26% (a loss of 9 cases from the Puente pool=13% and a loss of 36 cases from the non-Puente pool=34%). The mean grades for those Regular section Latinos remaining in 1A are not significantly different than those in the Puente section. The non-Puente Latinos in English 1A don't fail, they bail with a W grade to repeat another day.

CONCLUSION

Based on the student characteristics available on the student database, Puente students are not significantly different from other Latinos who enrolled in regular sections of English 96, but they significantly outperform the regular section Latino students in:

- English 96 retention (completing the course)
- English 96 final grade
- Progression to English 1A
- English 1A retention
- English 1A final grade

There is no evidence that selection bias contributes to this grade outcome. The Puente Program participants have equivalent initial G P A s and are similar on every variable measured except age, and that difference is small. Nor is there any evidence from the "progressor" dataset that grades are inflated relative to the larger body of students progressing to English 1A. Puente students who progress to 1A have the same mean grades as non-Puente Latinos who progress.

In this three year time frame, these single sections of the Puente Program are responsible for:

- 30 % of all Latinos at City College who succeeded in English 96
- 49% of all Latinos at City College who succeeded in English 1A

Evidence from the last three years indicates that the Puente Program is successful in serving the needs of both Latino students and the institution by substantially increasing the numbers of Latinos successfully completing the English 96--English 1A course sequence.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Unsuccessful Students: Follow-Up Study. In preparing the dataset for this study, a significant number of duplicate (between terms) names had to be removed. These are students who repeatedly enroll in the same course term after term without earning a grade. It would be useful to contact a sample of these students to determine the reasons for repeated, unsuccessful enrollments.

Successful English 96 Completers Not Advancing to English 1A

- Are they completing their educational objectives at the 96 level?
- Are students who transfer after completing English 96 as successful in the senior institution as students who transfer after completing a higher level English course (such as 1A, 1B, Or 40)?

Institutional Costs

- What is the relative cost benefit ratio to the institution for the high percentage of unsuccessful outcomes? What would be the fiscal impact of reducing the rate of W grades?
- Would an additional Puente section increase institutional efficiency by significantly lowering the number of repeating students?

Personal Costs

- What is the rate of re-enrollment?
- What is the average time to successful outcome per repeating student?

Beyond English 1A

- How many Latinos go on to 1B? How many go on to English 40? What are the grade outcomes for Puente origin and non-Puente origin students in these City College courses?
- According to the records of the statewide Puente office, 58% percent of the 1991 City College Puente cohort transfered to a California, public senior institution within 4 years. This well exceeds the 38% transfer rate for the statewide 1991 Puente cohort. City College needs to develop the capacity to track all students beyond this institution--but it is especially important to know the long-term student outcomes for those participating in special programs, like Puente.